

# Overview and Scrutiny

Community Response during COVID19

3 September 2020



West Suffolk Council's community response role



Overview – Voluntary and community sector (VCS) Covid response



Reflections from our communities and VCS



Impact on our VCS



Funding allocated to VCS groups

# Community response role

- Suffolk Collaboration working together (all statutory and health partners across Suffolk, alongside voluntary and community sector)
- Response to support those most vulnerable in our communities, including the clinically vulnerable, high risk and those self isolating due to symptoms
- Districts and Borough councils delivered a direct service to customers who need support with accessing food, medicines and linking in with wellbeing support. We also assisted people register on the Extremely Vulnerable government scheme.
- Every household in Suffolk were sent details about the service.
- Service available 7 days per week (changed to 5 days per week from July).
- Used our Families and Communities Team and Customer Service Team as the foundation for the service – rapid mobilisation

**Home, But Not Alone**  
Supporting vulnerable people in Suffolk

Coronavirus Emergency Phonenumber

 **0800 876 6926**



## Community response role

- Call centre and referral mechanism in place within 48 hours. Collaboration across Suffolk
- Staffed by Customer Service, Families and Communities, LifeLink and staff seconded from across the council.
- Huge input from support teams including ICT, Legal, HR, Finance and Communications
- At peak, a team of **38** providing support to individuals and to our volunteers within the community
- Since the end of March to beginning of August West Suffolk Council supported over **900** individuals
- Helping with access to food, medicine and with additional support where the resident was isolated/lonely.
- Over **400** different support mechanisms within our communities across West Suffolk – formal voluntary sector; informal community groups; individuals; businesses; and parish and town councils

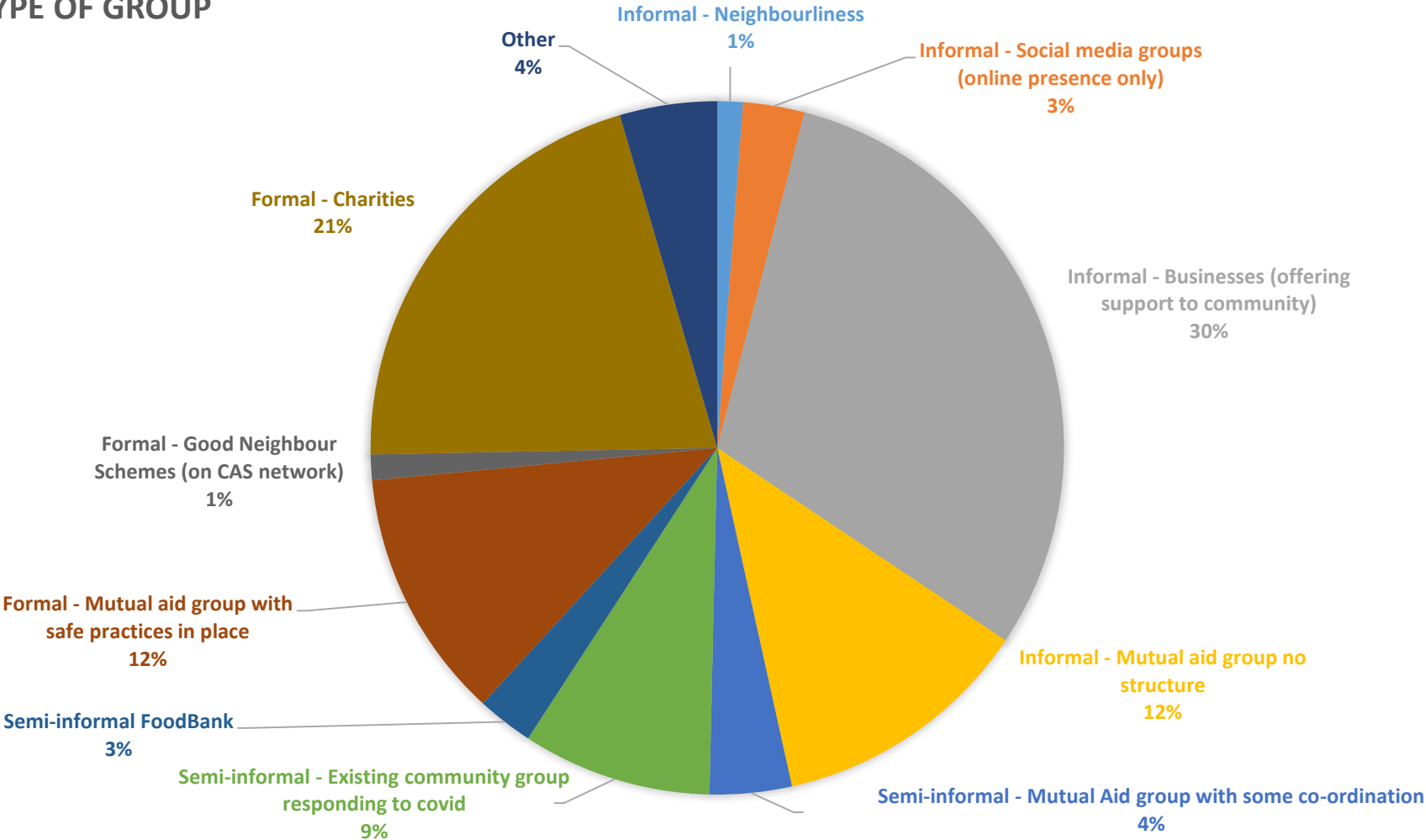
# Community response role

- Linking volunteers into groups and charities – through Good Sam and Tribe apps
- Amended criteria around Locality Budget to support CV19 response within communities
- Regular communications and support to our VCS and signposting to additional funding alongside CAS and SALC
- Working with Community Action Suffolk on Funding Surgeries and promoting webinars to support our VCS
  - Budgeting/financial forecasting
  - Policies/procedures
  - Volunteer management
  - Technology workshops
- Building on our Families and Communities investment - supporting the set up of new groups and structures, as well as safeguarding concerns and supporting with procedures
- LifeLink paused new referrals for 8 weeks – provided support to existing caseload and supported those most vulnerable on shielding list for the 8 week period.

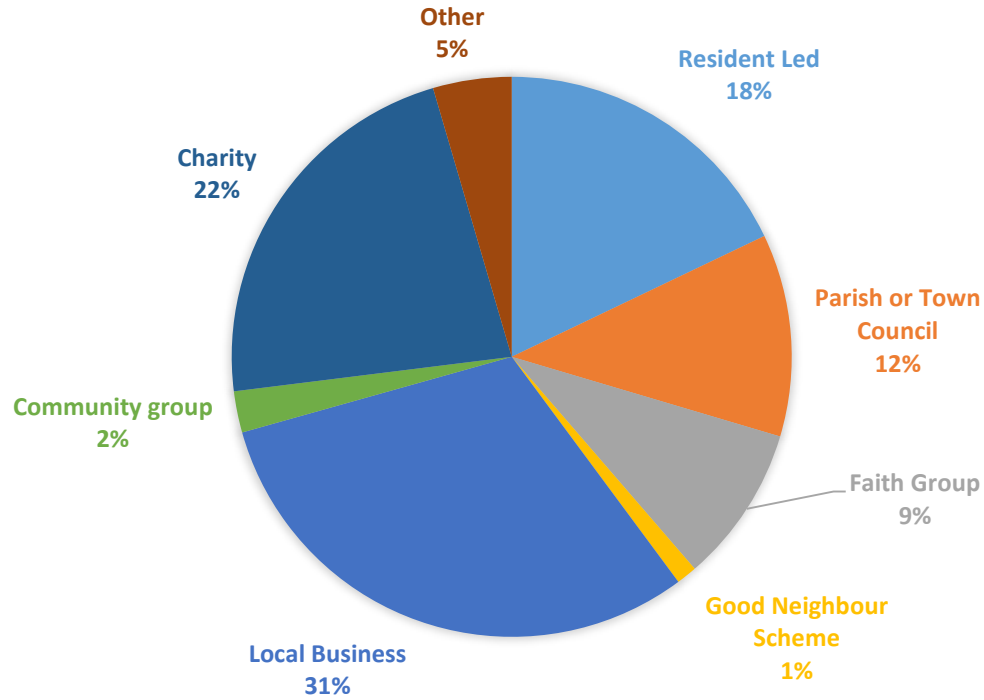
# Overview

419 contacts across West Suffolk supported our most vulnerable within the community

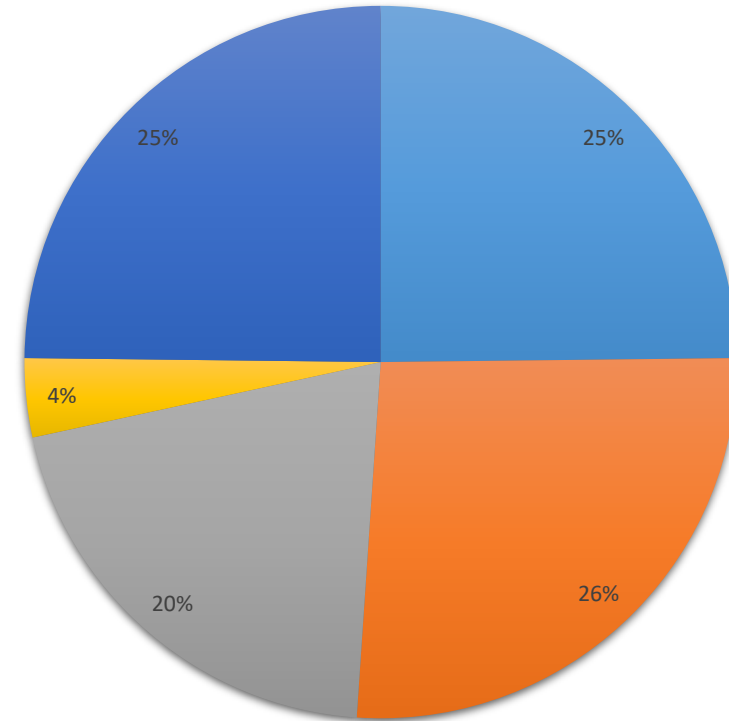
## TYPE OF GROUP



## LEAD ON RESPONSE



## Response status



■ Continuing 
 ■ Established 
 ■ Not sure 
 ■ Not continuing 
 ■ N/a

Over 90% of our parish and town councils were involved in community response

A number of organisations will continue

Council staff matched 57 Tribe volunteers into local support and charities

## Risby

Risby volunteers provided the community response to the village which was led by a retired nurse. The Parish Council supported the activity. Following restrictions easing residents have been keen to support the parish council in reviewing and enhancing the village Emergency Plan.

The local volunteers worked together with local assets such as the take-away to ensure need was being met within the village and to look at how future need can be met. True good neighbours!

## Bury St Edmunds

Two mutual aid groups now wish to continue to support their residents.

In the making we have Southgate Good Neighbour Scheme and a Mildenhall Estate Good Neighbour Scheme.



## Newmarket Volunteers

Pre-covid, some 18 months ago, the volunteer forum was established in Newmarket. This comprised of community groups and businesses looking at how they could support one another. Progress stalled until lockdown was imposed and there was a call for support. More than 100 volunteers came forward to help provide support to those residents who were shielding. Newmarket supported by the Town Council set up a single phone number for residents to call in on and then tasks were allocated based on urgency of need.

Now we are moving into the 'new normal' volunteers want to continue giving back and supporting Newmarket into the future. Moving forward the Newmarket Volunteers will sit under the Racing Welfare.

In Newmarket we have seen a new type of socially minded volunteer who have united for a cause, but not passionate to continue to support their neighbours and do something positive for themselves and the town.

## Haverhill Community and Arts Hub

Following the energy through the lockdown, Haverhill Town Council (HTC) now exploring a retail space on the High Street, which will be used as a 'base' for community activity and to promote community cohesion and engagement.

It will be a Community Art Gallery hosting Professional and amateur visual artists from a range of disciplines. The work will be themes like 'my lockdown art project', 'Suffolk', 'the colour blue'. Depending on demand, and social distancing guidelines the space will also be used (amongst other possibilities) to host arts workshops and showcase local talent.

In addition, the space will be used to host the Haverhill Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre and Good Neighbour Scheme coordinators will use the unit as their administrative base and as a meeting place, particularly for those who are not online. The GNS came together due to the amazing volunteer support across the town. It was felt that support would've been more coordinated at the beginning had this more formal structure been in place. Now the GNS wants to build upon the success and develop further opportunities for volunteers within the town.



# SWOT from our communities perspective

## Strengths

- Community Spirit
- Neighbourliness
- Volunteering
- Communication and support from the Families and Communities Team and HBNA

## Weaknesses

- Not having accessing to vulnerable/shielding lists – some organisations wanted that data
- Pandemic not featuring on the local Emergency plans
- Tribe – confused about its purpose

## Threats

- Volunteer fatigue and shortage when furlough ends
- Social distancing concerns/ Concerns about a second wave
- Funding (formal organisations)

## Opportunities

- Developing into a Good Neighbour Scheme
- Parish and Town Councils engaged with health agenda
- New kind of volunteering – rallied by purpose
- Further involvement and engagement of main groups should we need to stand HBNA back up again

# Impact on the VCS surveys

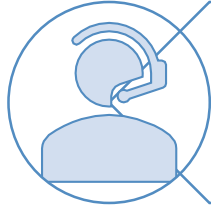
Community Action Suffolk conducted three surveys  
Fourth survey is currently available

Each organisation were asked if they had enough funds to remain operational. The response went from 60% (April) thinking they might fold within 12 months to 40% (May)

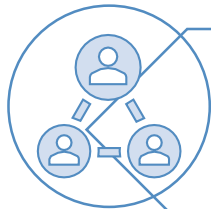
Confidence is continuing to increase, which could be in line with the assistance and support provided by the Council and also the Collaborative Communities Board

# Digital and social distancing

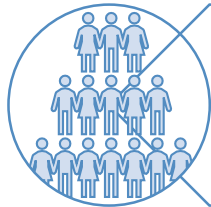
Many of those surveyed said they had taken action in response to Covid 19 and have changed the way that they work



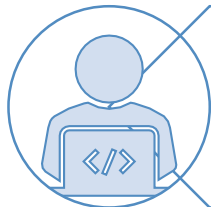
24% have run virtual events  
over 16% have invested in new IT tools to allow effective homeworking  
47% have done something else – moving courses and communications on line, 'embracing zoom'



44% feel that the pandemic will change the way they engage with their users / supporters for the better



Just under 41% expect to increase their digital activities going forward whilst a further  
54% will sustain their current level of activity



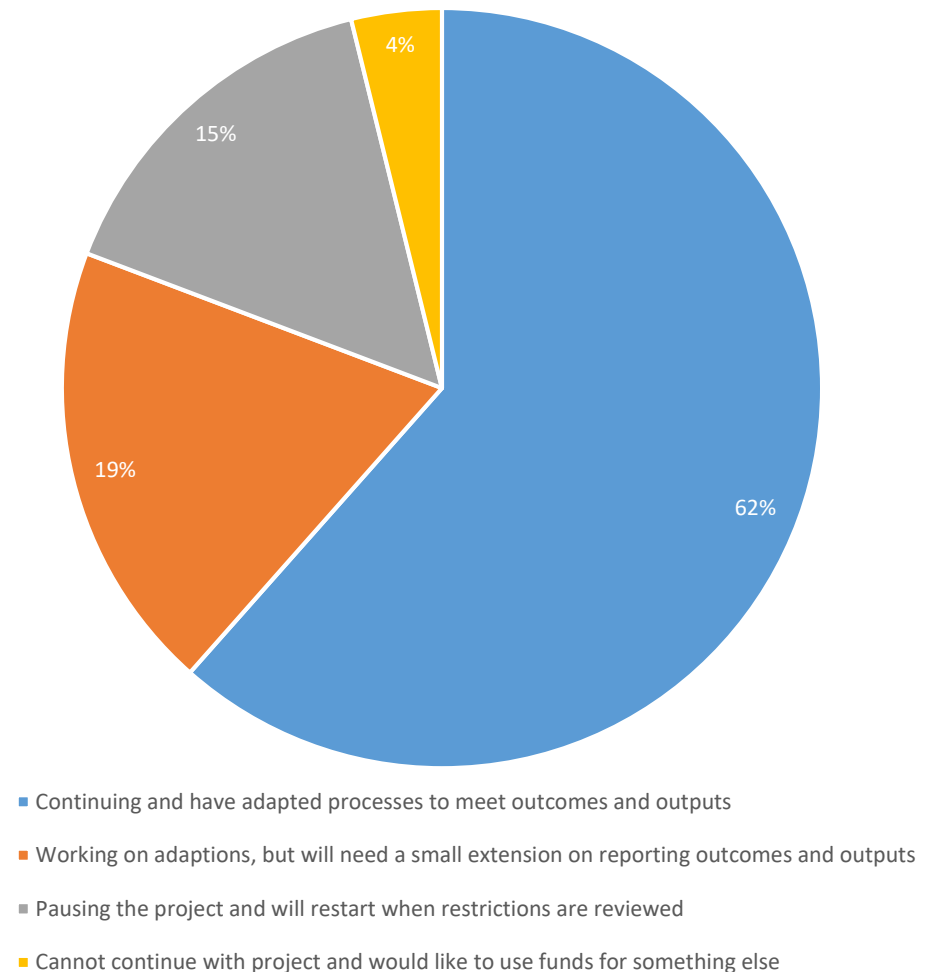
20% had never worked from home before social distancing was put into place  
80% have occasionally, regularly or always worked from home  
Within the 80% there is a sizeable majority of 37% who say that they always worked from home prior to social distancing

# Community Chest funding 2020/2021

Community Chest funded projects - financial - 81% of organisations are confident in being able to deliver the original outcomes and outputs which were agreed as part of the Community Chest funding, but through different means.

Only 15% of organisations have paused their projects but have every intention of working with us to find a practical and safe way to deliver their projects, once further clarity is provided by Government on the next phase.

Community Chest Projects - current status



**Steel Bones** are now providing online support through email, social media, zoom and telephone support. They would normally carry out home visits but due to social distancing and shielding measures they have invested in a different way to engage with their service users. All events they have put on hold until September, but service users can access their Fitness Club online

**Citizens Advice West Suffolk** have purchased Web Ex IT to enable a continuous service for residents in need across west Suffolk. They have been able to continue providing information, advice and guidance across the area

**Newmarket Day Centre** is currently closed due to the social distancing restrictions. However, the centre continues to offer a hot food for service users and has increased its provision, using the Community Chest funding. They have been working in partnership with others in the town to meet the demand, due to the lockdown. They have had additional support through the locality budget and Newmarket Town Council. They were originally supporting a cohort of 16 service users receiving weekly hot meals, they are now supporting 102 people weekly

# Funding in response period

End of March – end of July

## **West Suffolk Locality Budget**

£15,768 (Specifically on COVID19 response – more spent on other project)

## **National Lottery**

£792,426, of which £400,162 specifically to organisations that cover West Suffolk

## **Suffolk Community Foundation**

£2,225,390 to VCSE organisations in Suffolk

£601,366 was distributed to VCSE organisations working across ALL areas of Suffolk

£1,624,024 was distributed to organisations working in specific districts

Of the above £1,624,024 a total of £283,360 was distributed to organisations working solely in the West Suffolk area

# Recommendations/actions

Our investment over many years in the Families and Communities approach meant there was a solid foundation on which to build and respond very quickly. Continue to support and develop relationships with our communities through our Families and Communities Approach, working in partnership with the West Suffolk Alliance and Community Action Suffolk

Co-produce the Volunteering Strategy with partners and volunteers to build on the volunteering we have seen throughout the pandemic, so to capture this new wave of socially minded good neighbours. Out of this developing a Volunteer Passport/Pool scheme for West Suffolk

Work with Parish and Town Councils, Emergency Planning groups and other interested volunteers/groups in the community to rework Community Emergency Plans in light of the recent pandemic. This work to be led by the Emergency Planning team and supported by the Families and Communities team with local intelligence and connections

If we need to restart Home but Not Alone, we should facilitate 'connecting group sessions' to support one another and to share ideas. We could also look at how we bring some of the larger support functions across the area into the conversation at an earlier point, so there is more local ownership

## Links

State of the VCS

<https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/covid-19-response/>